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MANAGEMENT AUDIT REPORT

of the

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

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C. Erwin Piper
City Administrative Officer

August, 1975

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INTRODUCTION

- The Recreation and Parks Department is established by Charter. It is under the control of a five-member citizen board, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.
- The Department controls its own funds, adopts an annual budget, creates positions, and fixes the salaries of its employees. It operates, manages, and controls all property owned or controlled by the City for public recreation.
- The Commission appoints the General Manager who serves as the Department's chief administrative officer under the Civil Service provisions of the Charter.
- The Department operates and maintains parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, golf courses, recreation centers, museums and historical sites, a zoo, an observatory, cultural facilities, and recreation camps.
- The 1974-75 budget provides for approximately 2,000 regular full-time positions, and the equivalent of approximately 560 full-time positions for part-time and seasonal staffing.
- The total estimated cost indicated in the 1974-75 Budget exceeds \$53,000,000, including salaries, expense, equipment and special items in the Department's budget, related costs in other budget appropriations, capital improvements, and bond redemption.
- Not all of the Department's activities are discussed in this report. In the interest of brevity it focuses on those areas where significant improvements should be made.



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COMMENTS

The Department of Recreation and Parks provides a wide variety of services directly to the community. Department personnel functioning at the community level are to be commended for their dedication, enthusiasm and resourcefulness in providing many outstanding services.

However, management has not given adequate attention to many vital support activities that are essential to maximize the delivery of services. Notable among these is the lack of systematic planning and allocation of the Department's resources.

One purpose of this management audit, which was requested by the General Manager, was to evaluate a proposed major organizational restructuring of the Department in accordance with its "area concept."

Our findings indicate that a period of organizational stability is essential to permit Department management to address the fundamental problems detected during this audit. For this reason only minor organizational adjustments are proposed.

The Department's Affirmative Action Program was approved in 1974 and implementation has begun. A detailed report is attached. A supplemental report concerning hiring and timekeeping practices is also attached.

This report has been reviewed by the President of the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners. It has also been reviewed by the General Manager who concurs with the exception of Recommendation Nos. 12 and 13.

FINDINGS

1. Inadequate planning and allocation of resources for improvements and operations impair the delivery of many services to the community and the utilization of Department maintenance and construction forces. Resulting conditions are:
 - a. The poor condition or lack of suitable recreation and service facilities and improvements at many locations throughout the City.
See Recommendation Nos. 1 through 5.
 - b. The unavailability of necessary tools, equipment, and supplies.
See Recommendation Nos. 6 and 7.
2. The delivery of services to the public is also adversely affected by:
 - a. Ineffective solutions to problems at recreation centers experiencing vandalism, violence or threats of violence.
See Recommendation No. 8.
 - b. Inadequate supervision of activities at recreation centers to assure adequate and high quality programming.
See Recommendation Nos. 8 and 9.
 - c. Excessive effort required of recreation personnel in administering self-sustaining classes.
See Recommendation No. 10.
 - d. Deficiencies in processing concession agreements.
See Recommendation No. 11.

3. The utilization of grounds maintenance and construction forces is not being maximized due to the:
 - a. Inappropriate organization of certain grounds maintenance activities.
See Recommendation Nos. 12 and 13.
 - b. Absence of an appropriate definition of duties of grounds maintenance personnel.
See Recommendation No. 14.
 - c. Lack of continuing development and implementation of improved work methods.
See Recommendation No. 15.
4. The Zoo and the Observatory are not being utilized to their full potential.
See Recommendation Nos. 16 through 18.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners:

1. In order to assure that recreation center structures are appropriate:

To provide a desirable level of recreation activities in each community, and

To provide a comparable level of recreation activities between the various communities throughout the City, and

To serve the changing recreation needs of each community due to changes in age groups, ethnic composition, and/or cultural patterns over the life of a facility.

- a. Reaffirm the policy and practice that recreation activities will be provided for and determined by the desires of the community, subject to any limitations imposed by available community facilities.
- b. Establish definitive "recreation activity standards" setting forth the types of recreation activities that will be provided for in the design and construction of new recreation center structures. In formulating the "recreation activity standards," consideration should be given to the views and desires of all interested individuals and organizations from all communities throughout the City.
- c. Establish "design and space standards" for the various elements of the facility such as gym, classrooms, stage, storage rooms, and offices to adequately accommodate the activities included in the "recreation activity standards."
- d. Establish building material, equipment, and construction detail standards.
- e. Adopt a policy that all recreation center structures will be constructed in accordance with the standards proposed above, rather than designing and constructing unique facilities for each community based upon its desires.

- f. Incorporate appropriate portions of the foregoing standards in the recreation element of the City's General Plan.
- 2. Discontinue reducing the size and functional scope of structures during the design phase due to funding limitations and either:
 - a. Phase construction so that high priority community needs can be satisfied without foreclosing construction of additions to the facility at a later time if additional funds are available, with the ultimate objective of constructing a complete facility in accordance with Board approved standards, or;
 - b. Defer construction until adequate funds are available to construct a complete facility in accordance with Board approved standards.
- 3. Establish "standard recreation center plans" incorporating the Board approved standards and phased construction recommended above.

It is recommended that the General Manager:

- 4. a. Centralize in the Planning and Development Branch responsibility for coordinating all advance planning activities, studies, and assignments that may affect the allocation of resources for land acquisition or facilities development including the preparation of an annual Five Year Capital Program.
- b. Assign to the revised Project Priority Committee (see Recommendation No. 5b) responsibility for reviewing and evaluating all proposed capital projects and making recommendations to the General Manager as to priority, scheduling and allocation of resources from all funding sources to be used as a basis for preparation of a comprehensive annual five year program for capital projects.
- c. Prepare and submit annually for the Board's consideration a comprehensive and completely documented five year program for capital projects, explaining objectives, priorities, and funding sources.

(Under provisions of Section 5.44 of the Administrative Code, the City Administrative Officer will issue instructions providing that the Board annually submit to the City Administrative Officer for subsequent distribution to the Mayor and Council a comprehensive and completely documented five year program for capital projects including all proposed funding sources.)

5. a. Assign responsibility to the Project Priority Committee for preparation of an annual program for submission in connection with the annual budget request indicating in priority order all construction and repair jobs to be accomplished by forces of the Central Service Yard including estimated labor and material costs for inclusion in the annual budget estimate.
 - b. Revise the organization of the Project Priority Committee to include:
 - (1) The Executive Officer as Chairman of the Committee;
 - (2) The Director of Administrative Services, the Golf Manager, the Observatory Director, the Superintendent of Parks, the Superintendent of Recreation, the Zoo Director, and the Director of Planning and Development.
 - c. Approve projects proposed to be added, deleted or changed in scope from the budgeted construction and repair program with interim additions to be proposed and approved only if their delay would seriously hamper operations, constitute a safety or health hazard, or would result in considerable loss of time or money.
 - d. Direct the Buildings, Facilities and Park Maintenance Branch, with the assistance of the Management Systems Division, to develop and implement a scheduling system for major construction and repair jobs.
6. Direct the Management Systems Division to:
 - a. Expedite completion of an equipment replacement program.
 - b. Review the staffing, operating methods and work space of the mechanical repair shop.
 7. a. Submit budget estimates for supplies and materials based upon an analysis of needs by Branch, Division, and Area.

- b. Determine, based upon the adopted budget, amounts available for each Branch, Division, and Area.
 - c. Decentralize responsibility for the control of expenditures.
 - d. Request modification of the Daily Statement of Budget Condition to provide appropriate information to assist in the control of all budgeted funds.
 - e. Direct Stores personnel to discontinue the practice of arbitrarily reducing quantities ordered to conserve funds, and to institute a back order system.
8. a. Direct District Recreation Supervisors to:
- (1) Provide more intensive supervision including more frequent visits to recreation centers and increased assistance and support to assigned recreation personnel, to identify and correct problem situations before they get out of hand, to report in a timely manner to the Senior Recreation Supervisor in the Area and to the Supervisor of Recreation Center Operations those problem situations that cannot be resolved at the District level.
 - (2) Work the hours between 1 p.m. and 10 p.m. daily which are more consistent with the hours during which most activities occur at the centers.
 - (3) Evaluate the hours of operation of recreation centers to permit maximum service to the community within budget limitations.
- b. Establish procedures to permit expeditious replacement of recreation personnel who are unable to cope with problems at a particular center and, if necessary, amend the Memorandum of Understanding for this purpose.
 - c. Provide specialized psychological training for recreation personnel to enable them to deal effectively with disruptive persons at recreation centers.
 - d. Give greater consideration to problems at recreation centers rather than to the existence of swimming pools in determining the number and level of personnel assigned.

9. Direct District Recreation Supervisors and Recreation Directors to systematically monitor quality of instruction at all classes.
10. Establish policies, guidelines, and procedures for, and implement on a pilot basis, a program to charge self-supporting instructors a rental fee for the use of City facilities, and to permit the instructor to collect fees from class participants for compensation and class materials to be provided by the instructor, with the amount of the fee, the number of sessions, and the course content to be subject to review and approval by recreation personnel.
11.
 - a. Establish procedures for processing concession contracts to reduce processing time and provide adequate lead time for renewal prior to contract expiration.
 - b. Direct the Business Operations Division to prepare and submit to the Board:
 - (1) Additional information on the status of concession contracts including reasons for processing delays and continuation of contracts on a month-to-month basis.
 - (2) A report on every concession contract at least six months prior to the expiration date explaining whether the contract should be continued on a month-to-month basis or if a new contract should be awarded.
12. Merge the Horticulture Division into the Grounds Maintenance Division; and
 - a. Designate the Horticulture Supervisor as the assistant supervisor of the Grounds Maintenance Division, delete the vacant position of Assistant Recreation and Parks Maintenance Supervisor, and delete the position of Principal Park Supervisor from the Horticulture Division.
 - b. Assign responsibility for the planting, park tree, spray and nursery activities to the Horticulture Supervisor.
13. Delete the Senior Park Supervisor positions from the Grounds Maintenance Division.
14. Direct grounds maintenance personnel to perform minor facility maintenance that requires common hand tools such as screwdriver, hammer, wrench and paint brush and provide adequate tools and supplies for this purpose.



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15. Direct the Management Systems Division to:

- a. Discontinue preparation of work measurement reports and withdraw the request to the City Administrative Officer for automation of the present reporting system.
- b. Review maintenance and construction work methods and recommend improvements where appropriate.
- c. Review and update physical inventories of facilities and grounds maintenance work standards; recommend adjustments to grounds maintenance staffing, and determine equipment, tools, and supplies required.

16. Direct the Zoo Director to prepare a thorough analysis of the patterns of declining Zoo attendance, evaluate the effects of existing policies and practices, and formulate a plan to increase attendance.

17. Direct the Observatory Director to:

- a. Adjust the schedule of Planetarium shows to maximize attendance.
- b. Make the exhibits in the Hall of Science more understandable to the average visitor.
- c. Develop a program of organized community support utilizing volunteers to stimulate interest in observatory programs.

It is recommended that the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners:

18. Eliminate the fee for student Planetarium shows for schools located within the geographic boundaries of the City Los Angeles.

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